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INFO AMEMBASSY ACCRA PRIORITY
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USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY 0062
AMEMBASSY BUJUMBURA PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: CAR NATIONAL DIALOGUE - DECEMBER 8 PRESS COMMENTS,
OPPOSITION STATEMENT

IN THE NEWS

¶1. (U) Most CAR private and official media focused on the political dialogue which began with an opening ceremony this Monday, December 08:

¶2. (U) The private newspaper 'Hirondelle' reports that MLCJ rebel leader Abakar Sabone and former CAR President Ange Felix Patassi have arrived in Bangui and are getting ready in the 'starting block of peace': The cartoon of the front page of this newspaper shows Patassi climbing the stairs of the National Assembly Palace. The paper also noted some discrepancies in the organization the forum (badges not yet issued, incomplete budget, late arrival of some guests, etc).

¶3. (U) The private newspaper 'Le Dimocrate' mentioned the return of former President Ange-Felix Patassi, an event which, according to the paper, is giving insomnia to some people who were close to Patassi and then betrayed him to join President Bozize (for selfish gains).

¶4. (U) The newspaper 'Le Confident' features the 'Big Start' of the CAR Political Dialogue and announces the arrival of President Ange-Felix Patassi, while revealing that former President Andri Kolingba is currently on a sick leave in Paris, wondering if he will ever take part in this important national forum? The paper also commented the individual and the global peace agreements signed by the government and rebel leader Abakar Sabone on Sunday, December 7, recalling in another article the history and various episodes of the political dialogue announced by President Bozize in December 2006. The paper also published a transcript of an interview with the former President of the CAR Human Rights League, Mr. Nicolas Tiangaye, now the President of a newly formed political party. Mr. Tiangaye expresses optimism on the forthcoming political dialogue, provided all players forget their individual interests and show the political will to resolve their differences and work for the common cause.

¶5. (U) The private newspaper 'Le Citoyen' announced in its editorial page that Bangui is living in the rhythm of the Political dialogue. It also announced the return of former

President Patassi, who was flown immediately upon his arrival in CAR to Boali, about 80 kilometers from Bangui, on a military base where he will stay under the protection of MICOPAX Forces. 'Le Citoyen' also published the exclusive Memorandum of the opposition parties, describing their rationale for the failure of Bozize's regime since 2003 and the goals for political dialogue, translated and summarized below.

DECLARATION FROM THE OPPOSITION

¶6. (U) In light of the inclusive political dialogue scheduled to take place from December 8 to 22, 2008, the UFVN, the coalition of the major CAR opposition political parties, issued a memorandum entitled 'Why an Inclusive Political Dialogue?' on December 7. The following is a translation and summary of the major points in this declaration:

¶7. (U) BEGIN TEXT: Noting the extreme deterioration in the security, political, economic, social and humanitarian situation in the country, which reveals the failure of Bozize's regime, the UFVN called for an inclusive political dialogue through a memorandum issued on June 8, 2006. According to the UFVN, Bozize's regime denied the obvious of the extreme situation and made the choice of a policy characterized by arrogance, contempt and exclusion. As a result, several rebel groups started to operate throughout the country particularly in the northwest and northeast and threatened to seize power. It was in these circumstances that President Bozize was forced to accept the idea of this dialogue on December 31, 2006.

¶8. (U) Justification of the March 15, 2003 coup

The UFVN noted that Francois Bozize toppled Patasse's democratically elected regime for the following reasons: Spread insecurity throughout the country; Growing extreme poverty among the population; and Bad governance.

2003 Political dialogue

From September 9 to October 27, 2003, 350 delegates from all of the country's regions, different segments of the Central African society reviewed all the problems the country was facing and adopted 828 resolutions during this political dialogue. During the closing ceremony of this forum, President Bozize committed to have the government implement as soon as possible all these resolutions. UFVN notes that the implementation of most of these resolutions did not involve fund mobilization. As of today only 15% of these resolutions have been implemented.

¶9. (U) President Bozize's track record

On the political side

Even after being elected in 2005, Francois Bozize continues to see the March 15, 2003 coup as the most important event of his regime. Others argue that the confiscation of the state power by President Bozize's clan and ethnicity has revealed the absence of democratic governance. The UFVN accuses the Bozize regime of:

- * Hatred for political parties
- * Attempt to control all other institutions supposed to be independent from the executive branch including the national assembly, the judiciary, more particularly the constitutional court, and the high council of magistrates, human rights organizations and private press.
- * Continued violation of the Constitution
- * Refusal to permit the independence of the judiciary

¶10. (U) On security side

When he entered into rebellion in 2001, Bozize created a lack of security throughout the country. However, the March 15, 2003 coup was followed by a general deterioration of the security situation in the country. As a military officer Bozize failed to eradicate insecurity. He even did not remember that during the presidential elections campaign he declared himself to be the

most qualified to deal with security issues.

Restructuring of the army: President Bozize constantly refused to implement measures adopted by the national dialogue held in 2003 to reform the security sector. He promoted a military recruitment favoring members of his ethnicity and clan. As result the national army does not exist any more, leaving the space to undisciplined, incompetent and corrupted and highly politicized troops.

¶11. (U) On the human rights side

Bozize's regime established a culture of violence and impunity among his military supporters. There is no need to remind the massive killings conducted by the presidential guard and some FACA members reporting to President Bozize only. These killings were reported by many human rights organizations. The military officers responsible of these killings were never punished.

¶12. (U) On economic side

Bozize's rebellion and his March 15, 2003 coup resulted in the destruction of economic and social infrastructure throughout the country, estimated at USD 41 billion. This destruction included roads construction equipment, cotton plants, schools and hospitals in several regions of the country.

In addition, military operations conducted in the northwest, northwest and the displacement of the population contributed to destabilize the agricultural sector activities vital to the Central African economy.

Bozize's regime failed to conduct appropriate economic and public finance management reforms.

¶13. (U) On the social front

Accumulation of salary, pensions and students scholarships; Poverty expanded among the population.

¶14. (U) Conclusion: The UFVN did not invent the political inclusive dialogue. The political inclusive dialogue is a requirement as it is part of the Central African Constitution. Various segments of Central African society including youth and various churches recommended the dialogue as a means to solve the problem of rebellion in this country. The dialogue should be inclusive in order to benefit the people cohesion. To give this Dialogue a chance, precise objectives with specific strategies to reach them should be put in place. END TEXT
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